

D10 The Patriot Ledger, Wed., June 17, 1987

Renovations to antique homes preserve historic value

By Laurie Croal
For The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — When carpenters started to build an addition on Leslie and Joseph Guccione's 150-year-old cape in the Old Shipbuilders District this spring, the neighbors waited anxiously.

"Sure, they were nervous," said Joseph Guccione. "People had to see how things turned out. Once they saw the windows and the roof lines they relaxed. Quite a few neighbors have called to say they are delighted."

The Gucciones have known since they bought their home four years ago that they eventually would have to add rooms to make it more comfortable for themselves and their three children, Christopher, 18, Amy, 8, and Taylor, 5.

That worried the neighbors. The home was built by Eden Sampson in 1837 and is located in an historic district.

The Old Shipbuilders District is comprised of 117 homes built before 1850 along Washington Street and side streets leading to the bay. A few of the homes also are along Surplus and St. George streets and Powder Point Avenue.

The area was recognized by the National Historic District Commission for its contributions to the nation's history in April 1985 and will be dedicated at the 350th anniversary celebration.

The commission is considering guidelines and restrictions so the

"Colonial charm of that district is kept intact," according to commission President Jean Colby. Town boards also are looking into it.

The lack of guidelines has not been a problem for the Gucciones. Local architect Barry Coletti, carpenter Kim Robinson and craftsman Richard Beers have helped to see that the clapboards, windows and roof lines adhere to the original style. The Gucciones also renovated a previous antique Cape, also in Duxbury.

"Ninety percent of the people who buy antique homes care about them," said Joseph Guccione. "It's that 10 percent that can destroy them."

The only addition the Gucciones are planning that might be a problem is the preliminary guidelines Colby suggested were in place are the atrium doors that would lead to a patio.

Although the Gucciones have been careful about detail, both think there is such a thing as going too far. Their home, they said, was built to be lived in.

"These were not built as museums," Leslie Guccione said. "They were built to expand even then. I don't think there is anything more expandable in American design. If they had patio doors back then, they would have used them."

"Even though this is a historic district this is not Williamsburg," Joseph Guccione said. "We should think of them as alive. They had kids and laundry hanging out back."

The Gucciones plan to expand the kitchen and add a large family room



Evan Richman photo

The Guccione home in the Old Shipbuilders District: building an addition while preserving Colonial style.

at the back of the house. Upstairs, a master bedroom and an office for novelist Leslie Guccione will be added. Downstairs, the Gucciones have refinished floors and walls and used muted paint colors to capture the feeling of a 19th century home.

But, when contractors found a well used by the Sampsons, the Gucciones

only hesitated slightly before having it filled in. Saving it would have meant redesigning the addition.

The Gucciones are not alone in their willingness to make trade-offs between preserving the past and adding the modern conveniences.

"One has to think that when you

own an antique home, you are entrusted with a precious object that cannot be recreated. But, you have to live in it," said Frank Kemp. He and his wife, Katherine, bought their home in the Old Shipbuilders District four years ago.

Please see HOUSE — Page 11

Owners of old homes seek modern living while saving past

HOUSE

Continued from Page 10

Their 13-room Colonial, a typical wealthy shipbuilder's home, was built by shipbuilder Levi Sampson as a wedding gift for his son Augustus in 1826. The Sampson family owned the house for about 100 years. The Kemps are the fourth family to own it.

Although space was not a problem for the Kemps and their two daughters, Kendra, 7, and Kate, 5, the couple felt they had to modernize some rooms and brighten the rest of

the house. No cosmetic work had been done on the home in about 20 years.

The black paint on the stairway to the second floor and the fireplace in the kitchen was intact from Civil War days. The Kemps were told parts of the house were painted black to mourn a family member killed in the war.

The wallpaper was dirty and discolored, woodwork had been painted over, floors had been painted gray, fireplaces had been painted black and indoor window shutters had been painted shut.

The Kemps eventually renovated every room, but an old boiling pot used to heat water for baths in the 19th century and an old slate utility sink were kept intact.

Muted colors, braided rugs and quilts made by Katherine Kemp and period furniture are used throughout the house to preserve the "flavor of an old shipbuilder's home," Katherine Kemp said.

A picture of Levi Sampson, which has hung in what was the birthing room 150 years ago, is kept in the same room today. However, the room is Frank Kemp's office.

Unlike the Gucciones, the Kemps had never renovated a home before moving to Washington Street, but they had always dreamed of owning an older home. Both had grown up in older homes. They moved to Duxbury 12 years ago and lived in a new subdivision before buying in the historic district.

Living in the Old Shipbuilders District is different from living in other neighborhoods, they said.

"There is a real mix in the neighborhood," Katherine Kemp said. "A variety of people and ages that is healthier."